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## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** The Honorable Ed Gaffney, Chair  
Members, Michigan House of Representatives  
Health Policy Committee

**FROM:** Terence A. Thomas, Senior Vice President, Advocacy  
Sean Gehle, Vice President, Advocacy  
Felicia Wasson, Director of Public Policy

**DATE:** Tuesday, September 5, 2006

**RE:** Support of HB 6253

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On behalf of St. John Health, we urge you to support HB 6253, legislation introduced by Rep. Gaffney that would extend the sunset for temporary licenses for Canadian nurses. This provision is an important component of our overall strategy to address the shortage of nurses that Michigan currently faces.

St. John Health is the largest employer of health care workers in southeast Michigan, employing over 3,700 nurses. While our recruitment efforts involve recruiting for a number of health care professions, much of our focus is directed at addressing an approximate 8% vacancy rate in our nursing staff. Nationally, the RN vacancy rate is nearly 16.1%. In southeast Michigan, we have been able to keep our vacancy rate below the national average because of the many Canadian nurses that cross the border daily to work in our facilities. Nearly 45% of St. John Detroit Riverview Hospital's nurses commute daily from Canada.

St. John Health, along with other health care providers, engages in a multi-faceted strategy to retain and attract nursing professionals. Support programs and initiatives that encourage nursing careers such as co-op opportunities, job shadowing, mentoring, internships and career expos currently exist. Additionally, we have implemented strategies to help attract as many graduate nurses as possible. Some of these strategies include nurse residency and extended orientations, allowing newer graduates to begin their careers on specialty units, flexible scheduling, sign-on bonuses and a loan forgiveness program. Finally, we are participating in a collaborative effort with other southeast Michigan hospitals to address these shortages and other workforce related issues.

In conclusion, we understand that addressing the nursing shortage in Michigan will take a multi-faceted approach that must consider several different remedies. To this end, we are hopeful that you would support HB 6253 as one of the many ways to assist providers in rendering the best care possible to Michigan's citizens.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this request. If you have any questions or concerns regarding our support of this legislation, please do not hesitate to contact our office at (517) 482-1422.

